

UNITED STATES PATENT APPLICATION

of

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for

**NECKLACE WITH INTERCHANGEABLE OBJECTS FOR ENTERTAINING AND
PACIFYING INFANTS AND YOUNG CHILDREN**

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CLAIM FOR PRIORITY

The present application claims priority of U.S. Provisional Patent Application Serial No. 60/509,158, filed October 6, 2003, the disclosure of which being incorporated by reference herein in its entirety.

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BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

A. Field of the Invention

The present invention relates generally to jewelry and, more particularly, to a necklace having interchangeable hanging objects that function as entertainment and pacifiers for infants and
10 young children.

B. Description of the Related Art

A constant challenge for parents is to provide simple entertainment for their children, especially when the parent is attending to other tasks. This is particularly true for infants and very young children, who often want to be held by a parent for long periods of time. Often, parents will
15 place an entertaining object in the hands of the child. However, the child will unfailingly drop the object to the floor, requiring the parent to retrieve it, clean it, and then give it back to the child.

The challenge of providing physically secure and simple entertainment for children has been addressed, but only to a very limited extent. For example, U.S. Patent No. 5,150,504 describes a system in which an entertaining object is attached to a teather cord, which is then attached to the
20 child's clothing. While this design does attempt to secure entertaining objects, it has significant restrictions. First, the clamp used by the tether cord can damage the clothing and can pinch a child's skin. Further, the system may be too heavy for the child's lightweight clothing. Also, the system may not keep the objects within easy reach of the child if the child drops the item.

Thus, there is a need in the art for a device that physically secures entertainment objects in easy reach of infants and young children while they are being held by an adult.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

5 The present invention solves the problems of the related art by providing a device that is worn around a parent's neck to allow interchangeable entertainment objects to be kept physically secure and within easy reach of a child being held by the parent.

 In accordance with the purpose of the invention, as embodied and broadly described herein, the invention comprises a cord, chain or similar device that is secured around an adult's neck by a clip, clasp, or similar device in the nature of a necklace. The necklace may be fitted with a retainer to which various interchangeable entertainment objects may be attached. The interchangeable entertainment objects may be equipped with a suitable mounting system, such as a pierced hole, for attachment to the retainer. The interchangeable entertainment objects are thus kept physically secure and within easy reach of a child being held by an adult.

15 The interchangeable entertainment objects may be of any desired decorative appearance and materials. For example, an interchangeable entertainment object for an infant may be constructed of a flexible plastic design filled with a colorful liquid to promote chewing and to provide a visual stimulus. An interchangeable entertainment object for a toddler or young child may include a laminated card with pictures, letters or numbers that can be used as a learning device. The interchangeable entertainment objects may also be age appropriate. For example, the interchangeable entertainment objects may contain primary colors for newborns (less than three months in age), bright colors and interesting textures for children three to nine months in age, and shapes and photographs of objects for children nine months and older in age.

Further scope of applicability of the present invention will become apparent from the detailed description given hereinafter. However, it should be understood that the detailed description and specific examples, while indicating preferred embodiments of the invention, are given by way of illustration only, since various changes and modifications within the spirit and scope of the invention will become apparent to those skilled in the art from this detailed description. It is to be understood that both the foregoing general description and the following detailed description are exemplary and explanatory only and are not restrictive of the invention, as claimed.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The present invention will become more fully understood from the detailed description given hereinbelow and the accompanying drawings which are given by way of illustration only, and thus are not limitative of the present invention, and wherein:

Fig. 1 is a perspective view of a device for holding interchangeable entertainment objects that entertain and pacify children in accordance with the present invention, wherein the device is shown in use upon a wearer;

Fig. 2 is a front view of an exemplary interchangeable entertainment object useful for a child three to nine months in age and in accordance with the present invention;

Fig. 3 is a front view of an exemplary interchangeable entertainment object useful for a child nine months and older in age and in accordance with the present invention;

Fig. 4 is a front view of an exemplary interchangeable entertainment object useful for an infant or newborn child and in accordance with the present invention; and

Fig. 5 is a front view of a solid clasp attachment for attaching the interchangeable entertainment objects to the necklace of the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF EMBODIMENTS OF THE INVENTION

The following detailed description of the invention refers to the accompanying drawings.

The same reference numbers in different drawings identify the same or similar elements. Also, the following detailed description does not limit the invention. Instead, the scope of the invention is defined by the appended claims and equivalents thereof.

The present invention is broadly drawn to a device or system for holding interchangeable entertainment objects within easy reach of children being held by person. Such a system is shown generally as reference numeral 10 in Fig. 1, as worn on a user 100 (i.e., an adult, parent, sibling, etc.).

As shown in Fig. 1, system 10 may include a necklace, chain, tether, cord, filament, or other devices used to suspend around the neck of a user 100 (such devices being generally designated as reference numeral 12). Necklace or other suspension device 12 may connect to a hole provided in interchangeable entertainment object 14 with a retainer mechanism 16 such as, for example, a clasp, a clip, etc., as best shown in Fig. 5. Necklace 12 may be made from a variety of materials, including but not limited to a soft but durable material. Necklace 12 may also be long enough to slip over the head of a user 100. Clip, clasp or similar retainer mechanism or device 16 allows interchangeable entertainment objects 14 to be changed easily. Multiple interchangeable entertainment objects 14 can be worn at once on necklace 12. The necklace 12 and clip device 16 do not damage the clothes of the child and/or user, and prevent harm to the child.

Interchangeable entertainment objects 14 are intended to hold the attention of, entertain, and pacify young children, and may vary depending upon the age of the child. Interchangeable objects 14 may thus be age appropriate. For example, interchangeable entertainment objects 14 may contain primary colors for newborns, bright colors and interesting textures for children three to nine months

in age, and shapes and photographs of objects for children nine months and older in age.

Interchangeable entertainment objects 14 may have practically any shape, and may be fashioned from any material, including colorful plastic or glass, precious metal alloy, precious or semi-precious stone, or the like. Other ornamental interchangeable entertainment objects 14 may be used, such as small figurines or charms of any attractive substance.

Figs. 1-5 show various exemplary interchangeable entertainment objects 14 useful with the present invention. For example, Figs. 1 and 2 show an interchangeable entertainment object 14 in the shape of a flower; Fig. 3 shows an interchangeable entertainment object 20 having letters ("A" and "a") and an object (an apple) disposed thereon; and Fig. 4 shows an interchangeable entertainment object 18 with contrasting colors. The object 18 of Fig. 4 may be used for newborns. The object 14 of Figs. 1 and 2 may be used for children three to nine months in age. The object 20 of Fig. 3 may be used for children nine months and older in age.

Fig. 5 shows an alternative retainer mechanism 19, in the form of a clip, which may be used to attach the interchangeable entertainment object of the present invention to necklace 12. Retainer mechanism 19 may be used in place of retainer mechanism 16 shown in Fig. 2.

It will be apparent to those skilled in the art that various modifications and variations can be made in the mechanisms and materials of the present invention and in construction of the mechanisms without departing from the scope or spirit of the invention. For example, the necklace may be leather, velvet, or a metal chain. The interchangeable entertainment objects may be educational, or may take the form of flashcards or plush animals. An entertainment object for an infant may be constructed of a flexible plastic design filled with a colorful liquid to promote chewing and to provide a visual stimulus. An object for a toddler or young child may include a laminated card with pictures, letters or numbers that can be used as a learning device.

Other embodiments of the invention will be apparent to those skilled in the art from consideration of the specification and practice of the invention disclosed herein. It is intended that the specification and examples be considered as exemplary only, with a true scope and spirit of the invention being indicated by the following claims.